FREE

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2017

TAGA SPORTS

KONQERing Saipan

q&a: william retardo | holiday flavors for athletes | swimming with the 'dolphins'
here's why you're falling behind | bodybuilding: the game changer

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HEALTH IS WEALTH

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2017

SPORTS CALENDAR

OCTOBER

» **NMISF OPENING MEET:** Action at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool resumes as Northern Mariana Islands Swimming Federation holds its first competition for the 2017-2018 season.

» **AFC U19 CHAMPIONSHIP 2018 QUALIFIERS:** The CNMI Boys U18 National Team will head to Australia to play against North Korea, Hong Kong, and the host.

» **MICRO CUP 2017:** The Commonwealth's paddlers will go to Guam to race against the hosts, Palau, Hong Kong, and Japan.

NOVEMBER

» **NMIFA YOUTH FOOTBALL FESTIVAL:** Northern Marianas Islands Football Association's grassroots program is in full display in this event as players in the U6, U8, U10, and U12 divisions from eight clubs play for a whole day of fun-filled games.

» **34TH ANNUAL MT. TAPOCHAO TURKEY TROT:** The race to the top of the Mt. Tapochao takes place on Thanksgiving Day.

» **TANHOLDINGS TENNIS CLASSIC:** Northern Mariana Islands Tennis Association holds its first tournament for the 2017-2018 season with players from Saipan and Guam battling in singles and doubles events.

DECEMBER

» **FA CHALLENGE CUP:** Teams in the boys U17 and U14 divisions of the 2017 NMIFA Fall Youth League fight for the bragging rights to end the season with a bang.

» **36TH ANNUAL CHRISTMAS ISLAND RELAY:** See "Santa" and his "reindeers" run from the PIC Saipan parking lot in San Antonio to the Last Command Post in Marpi for the 13.7-mile race.

» **2017 PACIFIC MINI GAMES:** Cheer for Team Marianas as our athletes compete in golf, Rugby 7s, weightlifting, and athletics events in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

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editor'snote

In college, I loved swimming so much that I chose the activity for four of my electives, spending much of the winter months with pruny fingers, frigid waters, and practicing how to hold my breath under 15 feet of water.

I also got to teach my youngest sister how to swim in the open ocean, what a scissor kick is, and how to breath in through one's mouth and exhale through one's nose.

So there is some irony in that I hardly got to get in the water once I got here on Saipan. Here I was, on an island surrounded by a vast ocean, and I got to enjoy the sea by watching it from afar, a postcard-perfect view seen from the safe confines of the office.

At the same time, the swimming clubs on Saipan are focused on the young ones only and there is hardly any room for adult swimmers other than striking out on your own. Yes, swimming is a solitary sport, but there is something to be said about sharing the pool with like-minded people, when you get to work on not just your breaststroke but also your socialization skills. Which is why what the Dolphin Club Saipan is doing brings me so much joy. Finally! A swim club for my age group! And they teach not just pool swimming but also how to translate that skill to open-ocean swims!

What makes the idea so beguiling is that the CNMI's newest swim club welcomes even those who are just starting to learn how, with free classes that are gentle even to the greenest swimmer. You only need to bring your interest and enthusiasm to learn and proper swimming attire. So it's not as if you'd be swimming next to a Michael Phelps when you get in the water. Newbies can take comfort in what co-founder Emma Perez said: "People can take as long as they need to work on the fundamentals, we won't throw them into the deep end without their permission, and we respect their comfort and non-comfort levels."

This edition of TAGA *Sports* focuses on that, of focusing on the basics, on the fun part of being fit and keeping fit. That is what we most often forget, that living a healthy life does not equate to boredom. We have to enjoy what we are doing if we are to sustain it. We hope our readers will take that lesson to heart.

As always, we welcome feedback and suggestions. Just email them to editor@saipantribune.com.

Sinseramente,

JAYVEE VALLEJERA
Managing Editor

Photo by Erwin Encinares

TAGA
SPORTS

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COVER ART

Lauri Boyer goes through a makeshift three-meter tunnel in KONQER Saipan that was held in September at the Gov. Eloy S. Inos Peace Park.

Photo by
JON PEREZ

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JON PEREZ

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writer's bloc

KAISA ANDERSON

Kaisa is a registered dietitian for the Public School System. She is excited for the holidays, but also loves it is sunny year-round for beach outings and celebrations. She is hoping to find a new sport to try and have fun with this month and is trying to gain back her skills as master chef in her kitchen. Wish her luck!

DRE DELOS SANTOS

Dre, a Mount Carmel School alumnus, has a bachelor of science degree in Kinesiology from the University of Hawaii and runs his own fitness business as a certified strength coach in Honolulu.

JIM RAYPHAND

Jim only recently found his way back to the gym (after so many years on sabbatical) and has been enjoying a newfound sense of inspiration through some of the gym regulars. He has no aspirations of ever being a bodybuilder himself, but holds on to a fledgling dream of becoming a plus-size fitness guru sometime in the future.

BEA CABRERA-O'MALLEY

Bea finished all the runs and obstacles in the first KONQER challenge on Saipan with her husband and close friends. The challenge brought out the athletes, achievers, no fear, and child-like attitude, smiles and laughter in every participant. They are already planning to join the next KONQER on Saipan.

MARK RABAGO

Mark has started running again. In fact, he did his longest run since his UP Mountaineers days—a 7.6-kilometer run—in late September. For someone who preferred munching to pacing the last 15 of so years, it's quite an accomplishment. Mark is now shopping for a new pair of running shoes.

ROSELYN MONROYO

Roselyn, a veteran journalist, is the sports section editor of the *Saipan Tribune*. Her swimming skills are limited to doggy paddle, so she is planning to join Dolphin Club Saipan's lessons one of these days.

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6 holiday flavors for the dedicated athlete

It's about to begin. The trio of holiday months is upon us—October, November, and December—each holding at least one holiday with food favorites and goodies galore.

However, if you are an athlete all year, or you are preparing for a competition right after the holidays, then sticking to your meal plan can be a challenge. How can one eat nutrient dense food, but still enjoy the spirit of the season?

Realizing food is versatile and can be used in many ways, allowing those seeking a healthy diet the chance to take your favorite holiday flavors and adapting them to your lifestyle.

In this article, you will find the nutritional benefits of some overlooked well-known holiday flavors as well as some ideas on how to adapting them into your meal plan while being a part of the holiday season. »

KAISAANDERSONRD
TAGA *Sports* Contributing Writer

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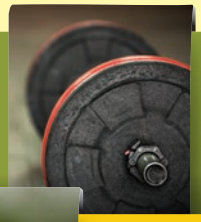

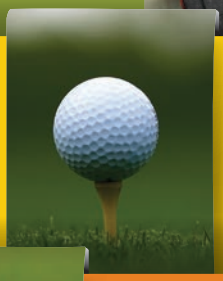

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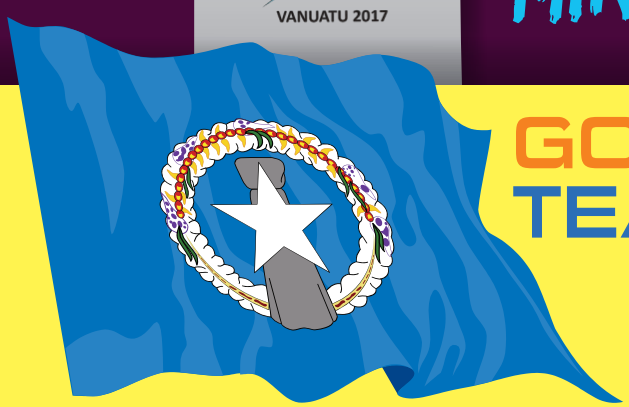

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OCTOBER

FLAVOR #1 COCOA

Cocoa is an ingredient that can easily be incorporated into healthy foods in your diet and can curb your candy and chocolate cravings while the Halloween sweets are being passed around.

Cocoa contains what is called flavanols, which in simple terms are a type of plant chemicals. Studies have found that flavanols in cocoa may be helpful to heart health by preventing sticky cells from clumping in your arteries and risking heart attack

Cocoa is usually added to baked goods and candy with large amounts of white granulated sugar, overall counteracting any good cocoa could have on your body.

To get the most out of cocoa, some ideas may include adding a little unsweetened cocoa powder to your favorite milk for a mug of hot chocolate, with no sugar or a sugar substitute of your liking.

Another option is making cocoa almonds to munch on by simply mixing cocoa powder, almonds, Splenda, and coconut oil and roasting in the oven.

Healthy Living

Fiber in a glass

Nutritionists recommend that we get 20-40 grams of fiber daily, depending on our gender and age. Blending fruits, nuts and seeds into smoothies helps meet that goal.

Fiber count

Fiber in 1 cup of fruits commonly used in smoothies ...

Berries	6
Peaches	6
Banana	3

... in 1/4 cup of nuts ...

Almonds	4
Pecans	3

... and in 2 tablespoons of seeds

Flaxseeds	6

Source: The Full Plate Diet, MCT Photo Service
Graphic: Pat Carr

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FLAVOR #2 APPLES

When I think about what a fall harvest brings, I automatically think of apples. When you are craving for those sweet treats, apples are a great alternative and have great nutritional benefits. Apples are low in calories at about 80 per medium apple, making it a good snack option for any athletic diet.

Because apples are also high in fiber, studies have found they may help control quick rises in blood pressure, especially for those with diabetes.

Some great ways to enjoy an apple during Halloween festivities besides its normal raw form is baking it with cinnamon, with a splash of lemon juice, with a whole grain oat crumble of oats and quinoa.

Even more simple: Dehydrate by baking thinly sliced apples at 200°F for two hours with a sprinkle of cinnamon. Then you have a great snack for when you crave something sweet and crunchy.

NOVEMBER

FLAVOR #3 PUMPKIN

Some may argue that pumpkin is an October flavor. However, a Thanksgiving dinner is not a real Thanksgiving dinner without pumpkin pie. The great news about pumpkin, whether it is canned or fresh or you're eating the seeds inside, it nutritionally has a lot to offer.

Pumpkin is high in vitamin A and vitamin E, while the seeds contain a good source of the mineral zinc. Studies find that zinc improves muscle strength and endurance for athletes, making it a great reason to add to your nut mix, cereal, or salad.

When the day comes for Thanksgiving dessert, and pumpkin pie is on the table, I recommend coming prepared with your own pumpkin pie smoothie, made from sweet ripe bananas, pumpkin puree, pumpkin pie spice, and your choice of milk. You won't be disappointed.

If you aren't in the mood for a smoothie, pumpkin pie oatmeal for breakfast may be more up your alley. Just add about half a cup of pumpkin purée and sweet pureed banana with a couple dashes of pumpkin spice to your oatmeal for a dessert-like breakfast.

FLAVOR #4 CRANBERRIES

Thanksgiving turkey is just not complete without some cranberry sauce. Although the canned cranberries contain some form of the berry, the other half is high fructose corn syrup, which is something you're probably trying to avoid in a healthy diet.

Cranberries, however, are an excellent source of antioxidants and phytochemicals. Which in simple terms means they have a punch of goodness that fights cancer-causing radical cells and is known for anti-bacterial properties with urinary tract infections. They basically kick butt.

These underrated berries are popular around November, but when dried they are a delicious addition to salads, whole grain dishes, snack mixes and more anytime of year.

Instead of smothering a turkey with jellied cranberry sugar, try cooking it from scratch this year. Combine fresh cranberries, fresh or canned crushed pineapple, and a medium diced apple and cook over medium heat until the fruits combine into a ruby red, fruity chunky, fresh cranberry sauce. Enjoy this sweet and tart sauce on your turkey, guilt free!

DECEMBER

FLAVOR #5 GINGER

Ginger is a staple ingredient in the Marianas. It is found in many entrees, soups, and stir-fried dishes but it is also a delicious spice in baked confections around the winter holidays.

Studies using mice show that supplementing with ginger have found that supplementation may lower bad cholesterol, which is good for your heart. This makes it a good reason to try one of the following ginger holiday dishes, if you are looking for some crunch.

Consider making some "gingerbread granola" or, maybe for a sweet tooth, "gingerbread chia pudding."

Both recipes are simple and easy and can be found with a simple internet or Pinterest search. These recipes should not only help you stay on track with your meal plan but also invite in the holiday spirit with its tradition, spice, and everything nice.

FLAVOR #6 PEPPERMINT

Peppermint is one of the pinnacle flavors of the holiday season. Nothing says Christmas like a good ol' fashioned candy cane. This small flavorful leaf possesses potential for antioxidant activity, according to a study conducted by food scientists. These scientists were looking at the effects the mint leaf had on radiated treated meat in traditional Mediterranean dishes and found it was not only a great seasoning. It isn't surprising that a leaf with such a powerful taste has the potential to also be good for our bodies.

Of course, there are plenty of ways to sneak this flavor into your athletic diet without breaking the rules. A simple way is to add a drop or two of peppermint extract into a protein shake of chocolate or vanilla for a candy cane twist. After a workout, you will be able to fuel your body and taste Christmas before Santa has yet to come.

These traditional flavors have been common in my holidays growing up, but everyone celebrates differently. Realize you will have different flavors that make you think of the holidays, family, and home. Overall, being creative, proper preparation, and an open mind with those favorite flavors that scream "holiday season" to you is what will make you successful in your meal plan this season. Keeping a healthy diet during a holiday requires quite a bit of sacrifice, but when athletic goals are a priority, there can't be a greater gift to yourself. Happy eating!

4 INSIDIOUS REASONS WHY YOU'RE FALLING BEHIND

DREDELOSSANTOS
TAGA *Sports* Contributing Writer

While I'd like to sit here spit facts and be a glorified cheerleader, it doesn't do much in terms of yielding positive results. In some cases, a stern approach is warranted.

I'm sorry if this hurts your feelings, but being completely honest is the first step if you ultimately want to achieve your goals. So, I challenge you to do better.

Here's why you're failing at fitness. Time to come clean.

1 YOU FAIL TO KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID

This has been the culture of our society. We always feel the need to overcomplicate things. Rather than break it down to its simplest form, our natural inclination is to skip everything entirely and jump straight to what shines the brightest. Admittedly, simple may be monotonous, but they're extremely effective.

This reminds me of one of my favorite quotes, "The things which are most important don't always scream the loudest."—Bob Hawke

Truth is: The less complexity there is, the better the long-term outcome. Managing stress and recovery, developing a routine, and practicing proper nutrition are more favorable than losing sleep over what supplements to take, or which source of carbohydrate is best.

If you get the basics right, the details are of minimal importance.

2 NO REGARD FOR FOOD INTAKE

There's this misconception that eating clean, wholesome foods will hasten the process of your development. There is an element of truth to that. But, if you don't know how much you're eating, it's difficult to determine whether you're headed in the right direction or not.

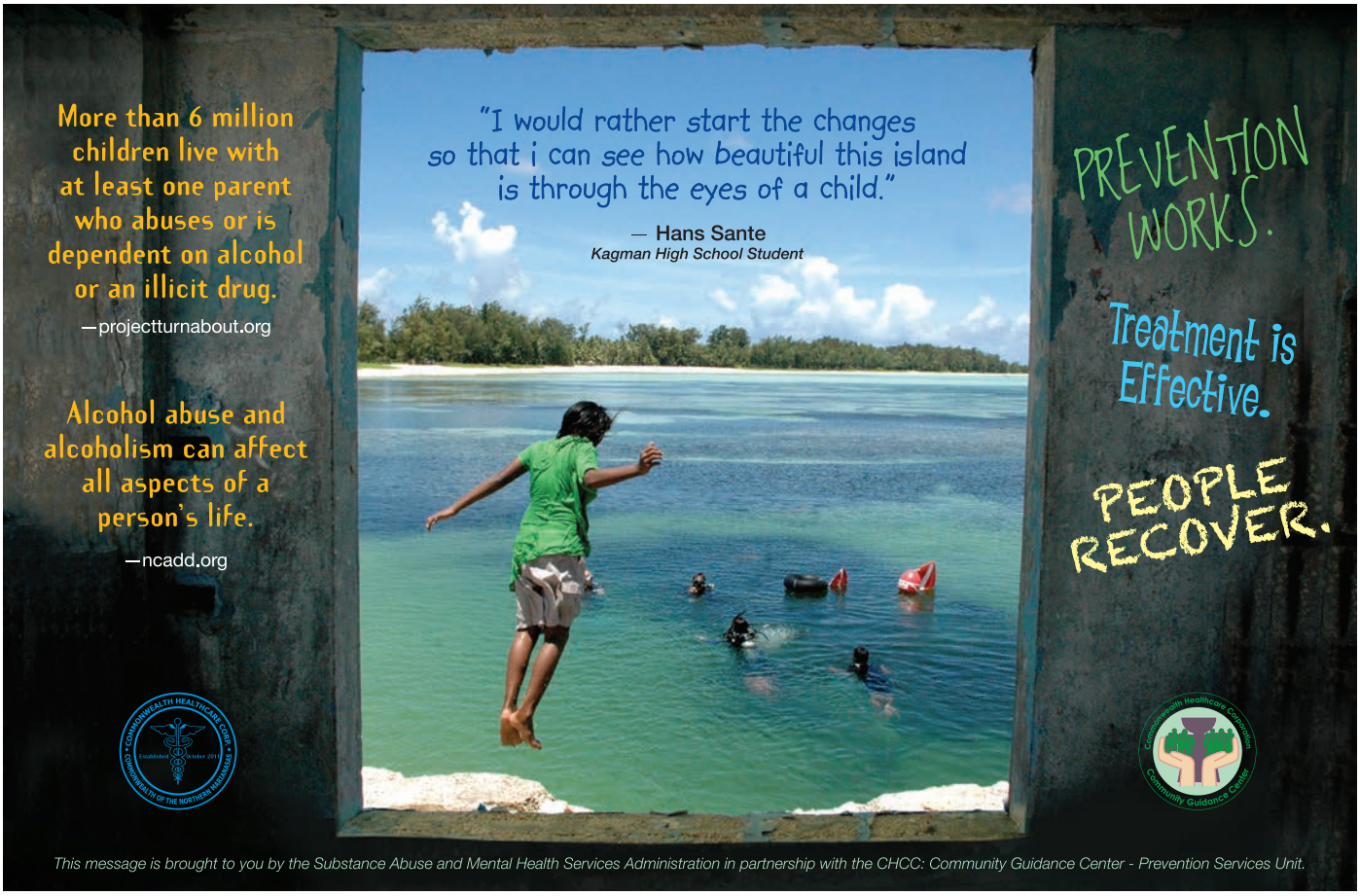
Food quality still matters; no denying that. However, your top priority is verifying your calorie intake. In the grand majority of cases, most folks don't know how much they're eating. Whether the goal is to maximize muscle gain, or induce fat loss, I can't tell you how many times I've asked people how much they're eating, and their response is, "I don't know." Let me tell you, it's virtually impossible to quantify the results when you have no verification on how much you're actually eating.

I'm not saying you should be robotic and track every single thing that goes into your mouth, but in my experience, doing so for at least a week gives you an accurate idea of where you're at. From there, you'll know where to go.

3 LACK OF HARD-NOSED EFFORT

As simple as it may seem, I've discovered that most don't work hard enough. Sure, for the first few weeks you're tackling your goals with gusto. Hell, maybe even a few months you're still going at it. For that I commend you. Halfway into the year, though, the flame starts to dwindle down. Next thing you know you're on another sabbatical.

Sound familiar? Of course it does.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"I would rather start the changes so that i can see how beautiful this island is through the eyes of a child."
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Kagman High School Student
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PEOPLE RECOVER.
This message is brought to you by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in partnership with the CHCC: Community Guidance Center - Prevention Services Unit.

On more than a few occasions, I've had people asking for tips and advice on how to speed up the results because it's taking too long. When I ask how long have they been training, their response is, "A few weeks." My knee-jerk reaction is to bang my head against the wall.

I've touched on this many times in the past, but it's always worth repeating: Profound long-lasting changes in your appearance takes discipline and consistency. It's foolish to think you can miraculously change your body in a short period of time.

4 NO STRUCTURE

Want to know what drives me nuts? When a person says, "I wish I had your willpower and motivation." Look, I'm not going to lie. It's hard. But, you can't solely rely on those resources because they're limited. They're expendable.

To piggyback on what was mentioned earlier, discipline and consistency reign supreme. So, the only way to truly have success with this fitness thingamajig is to make it a part of your life. That means in terms of training and nutrition, every day (to some extent) should resemble one another. Of course, infusing variety and a little freedom is necessary—but in order to make steady improvements you got to have a sound structure. At the end of the day, all nuances don't matter if they're not being executed daily. TS

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Being completely honest is the first step if you ultimately want to achieve your goals.

WILLIAM RETARDO

William Retardo is not only an ace in the kitchen but also in the golf course.

The executive chef of Mariana Resort & Spa recently topped the 2nd Annual Governor's Tourism Cup Golf Tournament at the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort. He finished with a gross score of 76. Coupled with his handicap of 4.80, that earned him a field-best of 71.20 net.

TAGA *Sports* sat down with the 49-year-old Fil-Taga Golf Association member and picked his brain on how he fell in love with the sport and how he has maintained his lofty status among the golf elite on Saipan.

When did you first pick up the sport and what attracted you to it?

I started playing golf way back in 1995. I used to play tennis then, but unfortunately, my elbow got injured and was advised to stop for a while. Left with nothing to do after work, I started going with my co-workers to the golf course. Later, I accepted the invitation of some of our regular Japanese guests to play with them. Without consciously knowing it, I was already drawn to the sport. It was and it still is very challenging. You hit the ball perfectly, then you would miss the next one! It will make you wonder what you did wrong.

How did you progress to the point where you have a very low handicap now? What's the secret to your success in golf?

I watched the Golf Channel religiously and made time to practice what I watched. The secret in any success, not just in golf, is passion. Once you are passionate about something, you would always take time to improve your craft. It will be a continuous learning and there will always be room for improvement.

What's been your biggest win in golf?

That would be my first championship at a Fil-Taga Tournament around mid- or late '90s. It somehow served as a validation that I was in the right track in this sport.

Who's the player, local or international, that you look up to?

Majority of golfers, if not all, think highly of Tiger Woods and that includes me. His focus is amazing. I also look up to Retief Goosen. His composure is so admirable.

What's the difference or similarity in managing the kitchen of a hotel and managing your golf game in a major tournament?

There's not much of a difference, I think. Similarly, focus is one of the main points. I have to stay focused on what is working well for me and learn to let go of things I can't control. And love for everything I do, either work or game.

What else are your goals in golf and how do you plan to achieve them?

Winning more tournaments would be wonderful but that's not my main aspiration anymore. I would just love to have more time to play with colleagues and friends. Enjoy their company and have a fantastic time on the course.

Any advice to those who want to pick the sport?

Keep practicing. Keep learning. Do not get intimidated by the big boys. Keep a positive mind. Imagine yourself already winning your first championship. Most importantly, learn to be composed in all your game. Rule your emotions rather than your emotions rule over you. If you had a bad shot, don't be too consumed by it. Let it go and try harder on your next. TS

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

It doesn't have to be a potion to be deadly.

Halloween Drunk Driving Prevention Campaign

OCTOBER 31, 2017

Don't be the real monster this Halloween

buzZed driving is drunk driving

designate a sober driver

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DRIVE SOBER OR GET PULLED OVER

take the plunge with the 'DOLPHINS'

ROSELYN MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

Ray Alvarez touched the wall and then turned to exchange high-fives with a 12-year-old swimmer, who finished the 100-meter breaststroke way ahead of him. Four other swimmers 30 years his junior also waited for him to complete the two-lap swim. Alvarez was not embarrassed to be left behind; months ago he could not even finish a 50-meter swim without struggling.

Thanks to Dolphin Club Saipan, Alvarez and other adults on island can now swim both in open water and at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool.

Founded in 2015 by the husband and wife pair of Pete and Emma Perez and part of the program of 500 Sails, DCS offers free lessons to everyone, but has attracted a huge number of swimmers in the 18-and-over age group. In its pool are mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, and others who've decided to take the "plunge" this late.

"A major driving force in creating Dolphin Club Saipan was the lack of an adult swim community on Saipan. In general, we focus on Adult-Learn-to-Swim classes, starting at 18 years old. Saipan has two other swim clubs that focus on children and youth: Saipan Swim Club, founded 1976, and Tsunami Saipan, founded in 2007. We do allow our members to bring their teenagers along and occasionally offer family swim classes, but our main focus is on adults. Our hope is that once comfortable in the water, adults can teach their own children," Emma said.

"We start all classes for new participants with a basic water safety orientation. For example, don't dive in headfirst, find out the depth of the water, ask about the geography of the open water, and listen to lifeguards and coaches.

"In addition, we encourage everyone to celebrate each other's successes, whether it is swimming 50 meters for the first time, getting their face in the water, or swimming the Eagle Ray (7.25 kilometers). We also reassure people that they can take as long as they need to work on the fundamentals, that we won't throw them into the deep end without their permission, and that we respect their comfort and non-comfort levels," she added.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The members of the Dolphin Club Saipan.

LOWS

Unlike the well-established SSC and Tsunami Saipan, the fledgling DCS first had difficulty bringing swimmers into its fold.

"Early on, low attendance was a challenge as we waited for the word about our program to get out. During the first three months of the year, the average was three to four participants per class. Most recently, the average is 16, sometimes as high as 35. We use radio, Facebook, the 500sails.org website, press releases, email blasts, and word of mouth to get the word out," said Emma.

Venue was also a concern before they got the pool time at the Kan Pacific swimming pool.

"Available pool time was an issue in the very beginning. Then Mariana Resort & Spa agreed to sponsor our pool classes by providing the pool and a lifeguard for free each Saturday afternoon, since we don't charge anything for classes and our teachers are volunteers. We are deeply grateful for that sponsorship. The pool class schedule is supplemented with classes in the ocean. We now offer free classes five days a week," the DCS co-founder said.

Once its members learned how to swim and showed significant improvements, the next challenge was how to "integrate" them with the competitive swimming community.

"There aren't enough adult swimmers to really have their own meets, and there are a variety of philosophies on when it's appropriate for adults to swim in the same swim meets as children. Personally, I believe everyone should have the chance to compete, regardless of their speed. For this year, the adults are welcome to the [Northern Mariana Islands Swimming Federation]-sanctioned meets, with certain time restrictions for the longest events (1,500 meters and 800 meters). The other clubs sponsoring swim meets will decide whether or not to include adult (25+ years) swimmers at each of their meets," Emma said.

"Regardless, we look forward to happily participating in any events we can and are planning to hold a Masters Swim Meet in the upcoming year, hoping to not only give adult swimmers a chance to compete against each other, but to give younger athletes the opportunity to act as officials," she added.

HIGHS

From just a few enrollees, over 200 swimmers had registered for DCS swim classes last year. To date, 189 classes have been held in either the pool or the ocean, with a total of 1,974 attendee hours.

Among these classes, Emma was particularly touched by the ones she had when adult women were able to float for the first time.

"I gently hold their necks, promise not to let go, and encourage them to just lay back and enjoy the feeling of the water as if it is a giant waterbed. I tell them to relax and look at the clouds, the birds, the trees on the mountains, and not think about anything else. I tell them that they work very hard taking care of everyone else and that this is *their* time. Many times, women have cried. I am deeply

WANT TO JOIN?

- Call: Emma or Pete at 235-7245
- Email: dolphinclubsaipan@500sails.org

ROSELYN MONROYO

Emma Perez instructs a swimmer at the Kan Pacific swimming pool.

honored to have the opportunity to provide those moments of peace and delight for them," said Emma, who understands where the "late starters" are coming from, having learned how to swim when she was already in her 40s.

Each class is also filled with laughter and lots and lots of water gulped by first-timers. In between splashes, a culture of encouragement and self-determination is developed as swimmers try their best to learn different strokes and finish a lap.

"At our open water events, once they finish that first 50 meters, they stay in the water, do the 50 meters over and over, and wait for their distance swimming teammates to return so they can cheer them in.

"And of course, the swim meets. Seeing adults do their first event, or take part in a relay for the first time in their lives, is incredible. It's a hoot, it is fun, and it's inspiring to see the 50-year-old 'high five' an 8-year-old who beat him; see teammates cheer on a fellow Dolphin who is attempting an event that is a real challenge and how that swimmer feeds on that support and succeeds; see the children cheer on their parents; and watch first-time swimmers figure out how to focus and pace themselves," Emma said.

SWIMMING TIPS

BEGINNERS

1. Don't hold your breath, blow a rope of bubbles from your mouth and/or nose whenever your face is in the water.
2. Keep your body long like a canoe.
3. Relax and have fun.

DEVELOPING SWIMMERS

1. Only swim as fast as you can breathe.
2. Hips are the engine that initiate the strokes.
3. "Elbows high, thumb to thigh"—Fred Perez

ADVANCED SWIMMERS

1. Set some serious goals and work toward them (Maui Channel anyone?)
2. Keep swimming throughout your life.
3. Share your knowledge as you go.

A HIT

Mili Saiki wakes up at 5am for the 6am open water swim and then returns home to get ready for work. It wasn't easy at first, but she plans to continue the regimen, as she wants to capitalize on the opportunity in front of her.

"Our physical conditions change and I was looking for something my body will like and that is swimming. Waking up at 5 in the morning for the 6am swim was not easy at the beginning, but I feel so good afterwards that now I don't care anymore. In the days I don't swim I feel strange," said Saiki, who is known in the sports community as a volleyball player and coach.

"I love swimming in the ocean. I would have never thought I'd say this. I used to go to the beach often to play volleyball, now it's the oxen's turn. The coaches have so much dedication and patience and the club is really doing an amazing job for the older community," Saiki said.

Alvarez, who is a volunteer coach with Emma and Pete, Carol Lynn Pierce, RJ Pierce, Maureen Sebangiol, and Christian Villacrusis, said that swimming with the club is a great way to socialize and exercise.

Emma notes the camaraderie formed among DCS members.

"The community of adult swimmers and the friends you make can last a lifetime, like no others. In the water, everyone is about the same height. It doesn't matter what your day job is, or even if you have one. Swimming is an equalizer. Those of us that come to the water are making ourselves vulnerable; after all, we are land animals. That shared vulnerability opens up possibilities for what we can achieve as individuals and as a group. It never ceases to amaze me how it touches those who stick with it."

10 REASONS TO GET THE FLU SHOT

1

Influenza kills

While the flu is common, it can cause some serious complications that sometimes require hospitalization or can cause death. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 36,000 people die each year from the flu and recommends everyone 6 months of age and older to get vaccinated.

2

The flu shot works, meaning it lowers the chances you'll catch influenza

The flu shot is safe and effective. Every year the flu shot covers four different strains of the flu and recent CDC studies show the flu vaccine reduces your risk of flu by 50-60 percent. And if you still get the flu, the vaccine reduces the risk of hospitalization for both children and adults over 50.

3

Now is the time

It can take up to two weeks for the vaccine to build antibodies and take full effect so get vaccinated now to give yourself time to be protected and before there is a shortage of flu shots.

4

No, you can't catch the flu from the shot

A sore arm is actually the top side effect, maybe a little runny nose or a little cough, but it won't actually give you the flu. It takes a week or two for the vaccine to take hold in your body so if you happen to get sick almost immediately after getting a flu shot, it's likely you were already coming down with something. The vaccine did not make you sick.

5

It Might Spare You A Heart Attack

A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association found that adults who got a flu shot were 36 percent less likely to suffer a heart attack or stroke within the next year than those who weren't vaccinated. According to the study, influenza causes inflammation throughout your whole body, which can cause the plaque that's built up in your arteries to dislodge and form a blood clot. Blood clots often lead to heart attack or stroke. However, if you've been vaccinated and you do get exposed to the flu, your body will be ready to mount an immune response to tame this inflammation before it turns deadly.

6

You Won't Lose Sick Days

The flu accounts for 111 million lost workdays and nearly $7 billion in lost productivity and sick days annually. Whether you are hospitalized, see a doctor, or take time off to recuperate at home, it's going to cost you and your employer.

CNMI Immunization Program

CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

VACCINES SAVE LIVES. VACCINES ARE SAFE AND EFFECTIVE. VACCINES SAVE TIME AND MONEY.

7 You Might Hold A Baby

Babies under 6 months can't get the flu shot, yet they are way more susceptible to influenza than you are. Plus, infants and toddlers are more likely than adults to be hospitalized or even die from the flu. Even if you don't have a baby, one of your siblings, friends or neighbors probably does. Chances are pretty good that at some point you'll spend time with a baby - don't put the baby at risk. Get vaccinated.

8 Not only do you benefit, so do your co-workers, friends and family.

There's a concept called 'herd immunity' that refers to an entire community getting immunized. If we all get vaccinated, we can't spread the virus to others so we're all protected from it.

The flu virus spreads easily — you can contract it when an infected person coughs, talks or sneezes and droplets get in your nose or mouth. You can also get the flu by touching something that has the virus germs on it, then touching your eyes, nose or mouth. The bottom line is definitely get your flu shot. It's so important not only for yourself, but for the community to get your flu shot and keep us all protected.

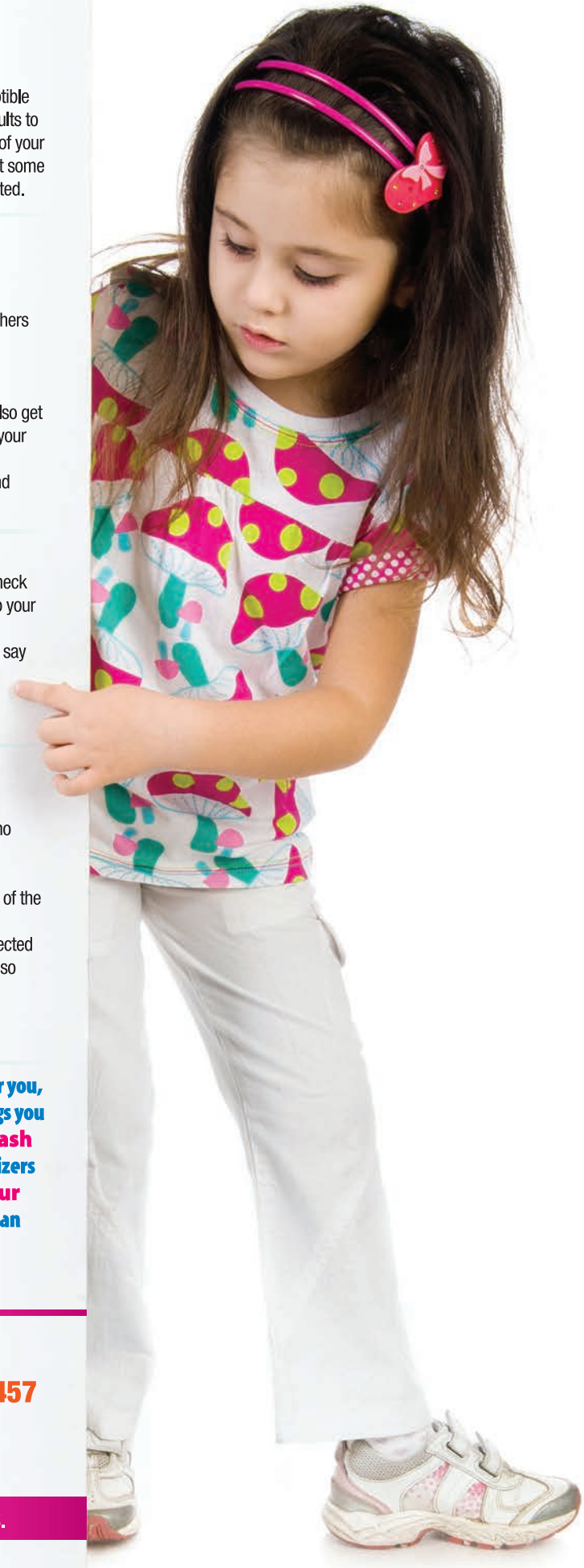
9 You Use Your Smartphone Constantly

Now that you use your smartphone to answer emails, do social media, or check your fantasy football stats, you're touching it constantly, holding it right up to your face and carrying it everywhere you go. Because of this, and because smartphones have hard, plastic surfaces that viruses easily cling to, experts say mobile devices are sneaky transporters of the flu. And most people don't clean their phone often. A safe and effective way to protect yourself from your flu-harboring device is to get vaccinated.

10 You Can Spread The Flu Even If You Don't Get Sick

According to Harvard School of Public Health, 20 to 30 percent of people who carry the influenza virus never experience flulike symptoms. Yet it's still contagious. While the elderly, young people and people with compromised immune systems (Diabetes, HIV, etc) are the most vulnerable to the impacts of the flu, that doesn't mean they should be the only ones to get a flu shot. Young, healthy people especially need to get vaccinated because they often get infected and never know it. Either their symptoms are mild or they have none at all, so they're out there inadvertently spreading the virus to others — girlfriends, boyfriends, classmates, coworkers, even people at the gym. Don't be a flu spreader, be a flu preventer instead.

Remember that the flu shot and other vaccines are not just for you, they are for the entire community. There are a few other things you can do in order to reduce the spread of the flu. First of all, wash your hands often with soap or water. Use hand sanitizers if no soap and water is available. Secondly, cough into your sleeve or into a tissue, never into your hands. You can spread the virus when you touch things or other people.



Contact the Immunization Program at the Division of Public Health:

Saipan: 236-8745 | Tinian: 433-9233 | Rota: 532-9457

Other Tel. Nos.: 236-8745/8780/81/83
For more information, visit www.cdc.gov.vaccines

VACCINES PROTECT US BY BUILDING IMMUNITY TO VACCINE PREVENTABLE DISEASES.

KONQER Sports came to the CNMI for the first time last September.

Also called the King of the Hill Challenge, KONQER happened last Sept. 9 at the newly unveiled Gov. Eloy S. Inos Peace Park, a former dump in the Puerto Rico area of Saipan that's been converted into a beautiful park adjacent to the iconic American Memorial Park.

KONQER—a sort of American Ninja Challenge— is composed of 15 different obstacles designed with extreme athletes and weekend warriors in mind. Our team was called Team Drunk Bea—a sort of prank. Composed of four women and six men in their 30's and 40's, we joined ostensibly for fun but the athletes and weekend warriors inside us secretly wanted to fill in the "what ifs" and not wonder what could have been. We were game.

Sept. 9 turned out to be a rainy Saturday morning. The world was conspiring for us to just stay in bed, turn on the television and play hooky the whole day.

Fortunately (or unfortunately), this was not the case for Team Drunk Bea and the other participants of KONQER that day. The mindset after registering was to stay focused. Fear and apprehension would creep in once in a while but the thought of not doing it alone was the saving grace. »

BEACABRERA-O'MALLEY
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

Photos by JON PEREZ

KONQER turning challenges

GER into achievements

We had a super fun team and I was excited to go through all the obstacles!! During the race it was basically just enjoyment!"

"I loved the retaining wall part and basically all the obstacles. I was slightly annoyed that a couple of them fell down but overall it ended up being a ton of fun. Our team stuck together and helped out wherever we could so that was awesome as well."

"I think the teamwork aspect is one thing that we all use in our everyday life whether we realize it or not. The better teamwork we have and or use makes us better people and better employees, if that is the case. Trying to decipher and get through difficult obstacles is a great way to work as a team and that is one thing I can take away from KONQER"

TRAVIS SPAETH (*father of two and engineer*)

I joined my KONQER team just the night before the race, but I was excited! I enjoy physical activity and competition, and it was great to complete the course with a bunch of wonderful friends."

"I loved our camaraderie, and loved seeing the camaraderie of all the teams on event day!"

AJANI BURELL (*father of two and an instructor*)

Some obstacles were harder than the others but doable. We entered as a team and we did perform like a team."

"KONQER taught me when you work as a team you can conquer any challenges, any obstacle and or any fear. We all have our strengths and weaknesses but if we come as a team we can make anything happen. Working together got us through to the finish line. We 'KONQERed' together as a team. That was the most positive part of the race and also a very important lesson in life."

YOGI SINGH (*trade specialist [electrical]*)

For me, the tone was set before our team race began. We watched the first batch of individual finishers hit the obstacles: two Marines and a civilian. Even that early, the mud and rain made the warped wall too slippery to climb. After several individual attempts, the closest was still about a foot short of the ledge that would allow him to get on top. All three were thinking about skipping the obstacle. But they decided to give it one last shot as a team, by standing on each other's shoulders. It worked. After one made it over, he went around to help the other two. Until that point, they had all been racing alone, no doubt all wanting to be the first to ring the finish bell, but it was more important to know they got the job done, 100 percent."

"All of us played a part and that's a great about a team whose goal is to boost, encourage, and push everybody. The strong sense of team spirit helped us overcome the challenges that KONQER brought to the island."

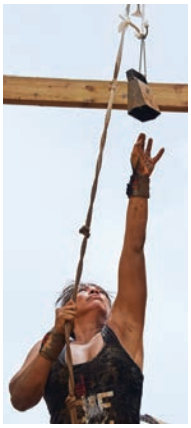
ERIC O'MALLEY *(lawyer)*

"My fears were quickly relieved once I saw the smiles of my teammates. For the first time in years, this event wasn't about what I could do; it was about what we could do together. I was humbled when I reached obstacles that required the assistance of my teammates to overcome. I was also happy to lend a hand or two (or shoulder, as the case happened to be) to my teammates to return the favor. Slowly, I began to appreciate the reality of our situation; that we were there to enjoy the event as a team. We didn't compete for the best time possible. We came to enjoy the best time possible with friends."

"KONQER inspired me to improve my level of fitness and revisit my thoughts about team sports. Competition had previously been the driving force behind my participation in team sports but this event taught me that I could have more fun once the competition is removed from the equation. More than anything, I think this will help me live more in the moment and allow for the full enjoyment of future endeavors."

"I was not looking forward to the event. As a veteran of many races, I entered each with the knowledge of what to expect. KONQER Saipan was totally in my head before the event. I joined somewhat reluctantly with Kathy and the team because it sounded like a great way to spend time together on a Saturday morning. Not knowing what the course entailed befuddled me. I couldn't wrap my mind around not knowing what the obstacles were.

BRAD RUSZALA (*father of two and spokesman with Joint Region Marianas*)



"I saw the presentation about KONQER at the Rotary meeting and was so inspired. The phrase about 'the children of today don't share our childhood because, instead of playing outdoors and getting active, kids stay at home and play games in the iPad or computer' is very true. I wanted to join to be a role model to my kids."

"I loved the company more than the competition. Joining KONQER gave me this lingering inspiration to do my best and to keep that teamwork spirit in whatever task is on hand. It makes me a better father too, spending time with kids inside and outside the house, enjoying our time together."

IVAN ILMOV
(father of two and a businessman)

I just wanted to have an experience of KONQER, which was new to this island. I always love trying new things. When I saw all obstacles at the park, I was more excited than nervous."

"It was great to help each other as a team. I don't think I could do it by myself. I enjoyed it like a little kid in a playground. It was super fun and I cannot wait for next year."

KIMIKO MCKAGAN (*mother of a 9-month baby girl and works at the Japanese Consulate*)

I thought KONQER was great! I expected the obstacles to be challenging and they did not disappoint, especially the 30-foot wall we had to rappel down. I have a fear of heights that continues to get worse despite my attempts to overcome it. This course had me face that fear while having to trust my teammates to help guide me down. It was a great activity to do with friends and to help encourage each other to push ourselves harder. It was great for teamwork, as well."

"My goal from the beginning was to at least attempt every obstacle and, thanks to my teammates, I was able to (at least for the obstacles that were still safe to go on). Plus, this was a great excuse to get muddy and drink good beer with friends."

ROBYN SPAETH (*mother of two and a teacher*)

I am one of those who is easily convinced into doing something "new and exciting," only to obsess over what I got myself into. The days that led up to the race, I strongly considered faking an illness or using my kids as an excuse to get out of it. Although I also knew I would've regretted not being a part of it."

"During the race, I remember the muddy grin on my face more than I remember the fear. I know that it was because of my teammates. It wasn't just our team. The camaraderie was seen all over the course. I cherish friends boosting each other, cheering each other on, and simply enjoying the experience together."

"I feel fortunate that I can surround myself with people who allow me to be afraid and yet empowers me to overcome my fears."

KATHY PAGAPULAR-RUSZALA (*mother of two and a teacher*)

BODYBUILDING

The Game

JIMRAYPHAND
TAGA *Sports* Contributing Writer

Changer

The game of life as it is, for many of us, runs its own course and too often you find yourself riding along—rolling with the punches—like an observer, or worse, a reluctant passenger on a southbound train to nowhere. You watch, through the hourglass of time, passing glimpses of what could have been and the quicksand piling up beneath you in a pool of complacency. Quietly struggling, you are too scared to jump for fear of what lies outside.

At the crossroads you find yourself knee-deep and still afraid, but an empty train pulls alongside and the conductor reaches out his arm.

"Grab a hold," he says. "You can pull yourself out."

"But I can't," you reply. "I'm not strong enough and I don't know where you're going."

"You are strong enough and it doesn't matter where I'm going…you can go as far as you choose to go!" he insists.

So you reach out, grab a hold, and suddenly you're moving in a different direction, a trail of sand tapering off behind you.

For Jocelyn Itibus, the reigning women's bodybuilding champion of the CNMI Bodybuilding Federation, her life began to move in a different direction when she discovered and committed herself to train for bodybuilding. It was "really supposed to be just another thing—a hobby—to add to my already busy life."

As a mother of four, a high school English teacher, and at the time (a paddler), she recalls thinking, "Really Joce? Like four kids aren't enough?"

"At the time (for reasons, I'd rather not detail except to say that our family was dealing with some addiction issues), home wasn't the best place to be and to avoid the emptiness of our home, I found things to keep my mind busy and exhausted and used up as much time outside of the house so that (among other reasons) the kids [and I] wouldn't have to be in that environment for too long."

It was only by happenstance in 2015 that she attended a local bodybuilding competition and watched the women physique competitors. I "was just stunned at their confidence. I saw a different kind of beauty—one that was feminine but strong." She knew then that she wanted that for herself and the rest, as she says, "is history."

In her own words, "Bodybuilding is special to me. It isn't about vanity or »

socializing or the need for attention. It has strengthened me more than just physically. Before exploring the sport of bodybuilding, I was just rolling with the punches. Complacent. That was the best word to describe me."

"When I started to train seriously, I noticed a change in myself. I began to see that maybe, just maybe, I could do what needed to be done. I was afraid, but there was an urgency that wasn't there before."

"I made decisions that I was never able to make, I said words I used to keep bottled up inside…My training somehow engrained in me the importance of doing what needs to be done regardless of the pain, regardless of the exhaustion, regardless of the idea of its impossibility."

"I remember looking at my first 175 lbs of iron to squat and saying, 'I can't do that.' And then I did. Or being told to get an hour of cardio in and saying that I can't even endure 30 minutes and then actually doing 90 minutes. Or saying that I can never use a bikini and then actually stepping on stage in front of strangers in the least amount of clothing I've ever used in my life. All of that somehow bled into my personal life and somewhere in the middle of the chaos, I realized that I didn't need to be so complacent."

"I know that it wasn't anything else that led to those changes. The strength I found came from my training and the commitment to be better than I was yesterday…To be better every day—a better mother, a better athlete, a better employee, and a better person. Period."

In the boxcar ahead of you, a kindred spirit not without his own struggles, but already in his element—a veteran train jumper, his own trail of sand long scattered in the wake behind him.

"You're new here, right?"

You nod with suspicion—still uncertain, unsure of yourself and unclear about where you're going.

"Welcome aboard," he says. "Come up here with us. Don't worry. I can help you. I was new here once before too."

Aaron Tomokane is a personal trainer, working out of Gold's Gym on Saipan and set on helping people regain their own strength and confidence through exercise and healthy living.

At 20 years old, he won his first competition in the men's physique category and has since racked up several more championship

titles in both physique and bodybuilding categories locally. Most recently, he is the 2017 men's bodybuilding champion of the CNMI Bodybuilding Federation.

"I don't really count the last one because nobody else entered my category to compete with me," he says modestly. "But, I am looking forward to competing again in October.

"Most of us who compete locally are friends until we get on the stage," he says jokingly. "It's hard for people who don't compete in this sport to really understand how hard we work for it."

As it happens, Aaron too looked to bodybuilding for some needed change in his life.

"I was into a lot of sports growing up and, not a lot of people know this, but I happen to have anxiety as well. My anxiety got so bad I had to stop training and dropped out of a planned competition."

"The truth is that sometimes my training can be so intense that it gets my heart rate going so fast and actually makes my anxiety worse."

Asked why he got into and continues to train for bodybuilding, he says, "I really wanted to gain back some of the weight I had lost. At one point, I had lost so much weight even people in my own family thought I was on 'ice.'"

He credits much of his success in the sport of bodybuilding to his mother for supporting him in making sure he had healthy options for eating and preparing healthy meals at home.

"Change really has to start at home. If you're looking to make a change, but everything stays the same at home, then nothing will change."

Some time passes. The ride is bumpy, but familiar now. Your sense of direction restored and a deep sense of belonging and self-awareness consume you. You don't really know where the train is headed, but you are sure about where you are going.

Suddenly, you're seeing life through a one-way mirror. On one side, the hustle, bustle and chaos of life are clear as day under the sun. On the other—you turn on the lights—an unfamiliar reflection of yourself… like the sun's rays off the moon on that rare, glorious moment when they meet in the sky and the "world stares in awe of their eclipse."

You look back, through an open door behind you, at the train alongside.

"Grab a hold," you say. "You can pull yourself out."

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Salute to athletes playing for flag and country

Zarinae Sapong, standing left, will be wearing the colors of the CNMI at the 2017 Pacific Mini Games in Vanuatu this December.

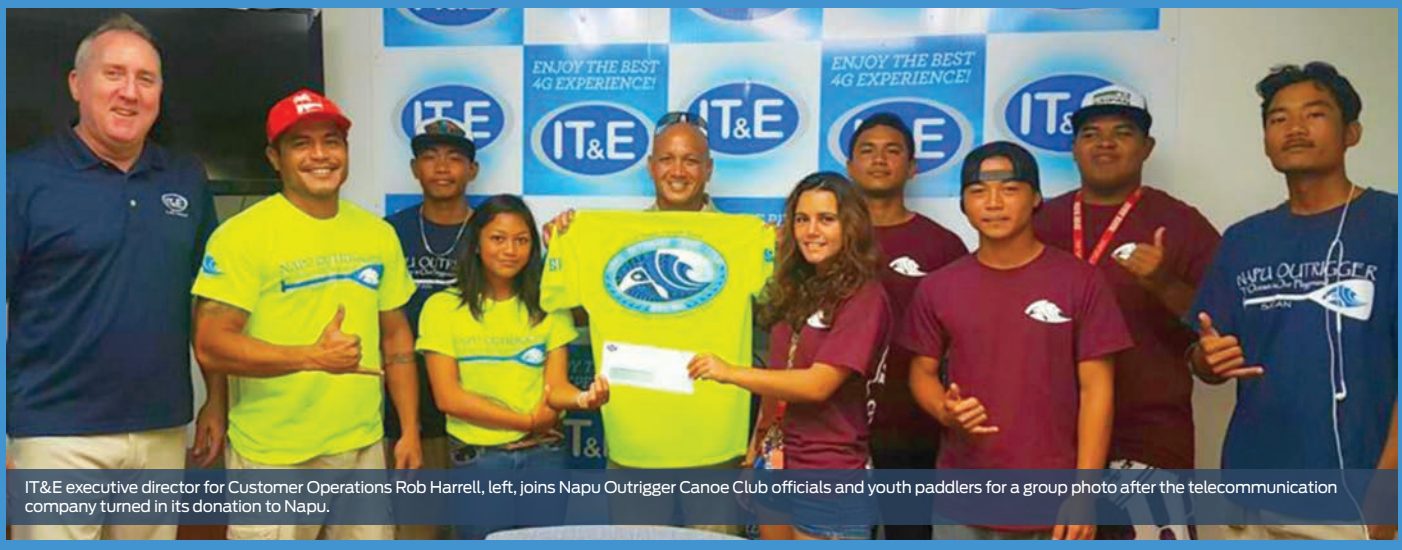
ROSELYNMONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

Playing for flag and country may be every athlete's dream but it is never easy.

Athletes train diligently, spending a lot of time and effort to improve their skills to get ready for the tough grind ahead while dealing with responsibilities either as a student or an employee. At the same time, they have to raise funds to defray the cost of their off-island competitions.

IT&E understand these challenges and tips its hat to the hardworking CNMI athletes. It also helps the Commonwealth's athletes overcome these hurdles so they could soldier on and make the CNMI proud.

"IT&E has provided in-kind or monetary assistance to promote athletes from all walks of life. Their hard work and dedication to achieve success is an attribute that we believe we share with them as a company," said IT&E CNMI marketing manager Natashia Tomokane.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

IT&E executive director for Customer Operations Rob Harrell, left, joins Napu Outrigger Canoe Club officials and youth paddlers for a group photo after the telecommunication company turned in its donation to Napu.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI Boys U16 National Team members listen to the welcome remarks of Northern Mariana Islands Football Association general secretary Ross Zapanta during a send-off ceremony for the squad last September at Kanoa Resort.

For instance, the company is supporting sprinter Zarinae Sapong who will be wearing the colors of the CNMI at the 2017 Pacific Mini Games in Vanuatu this December.

IT&E also backed the CNMI U16 and U18 national teams for its campaign in the Asian Football Confederation's qualifying tournaments in Thailand and Australia.

This October, the company reiterated its support to Napu Outrigger Canoe Club, which will see action in the 2017 Micro Cup in Guam.

The list of athletes/teams that IT&E has helped to compete here and outside the CNMI is long and it will stay that way.

"IT&E is determined to remain steadfast in its support of various youth sports organizations. We take pride in our substantial contributions to many sports activities, including basketball, baseball, soccer, bowling, badminton, outrigger canoe, football, tennis, swimming, athletics, and so many others.

"Our recent donation of a state-of-the-art baseball scoreboard at the Tan Ko Palacios Baseball Field is an embodiment of our unwavering dedication to give back to the CNMI community, and youth sports is a significant part of our island communities," Tomokane said.

Napu president Ponce Rasa, whose group will be sending youth teams to Guam this October for the Micro Cup, is thankful for IT&E's support over the years.

"Napu Outrigger Canoe Club was established in 1999 and we are the largest youth-based outrigger program in the entire CNMI. We teach, train, instruct, and expose children, men, and women in outrigger canoeing. It is through the continued generosity of private companies, such as IT&E, and our local government that we are able to sustain our program and promote the paddling culture," Ponce said.

Napu competed in the Micro Cup in Palau last year and dominated the youth division. This year, Napu's youth squads will go up against Guam paddlers and teams from other visiting countries.

Sapong feels lucky and honored to be among the individual athletes that IT&E has chosen to support, vowing to produce the best positive results when she races against top sprinters in the Pacific.

"My main focus when I go off island is producing the best time I can for my races and I do feel obligated to come back home with a new personal best when I compete. I feel more excitement than pressure when I compete next to bigger countries. Iit is a huge deal to be able to run alongside them," Sapong said.

Win or lose, IT&E is hoping CNMI athletes will continue their hard work and inspire others to follow in their footsteps.

"The only request we continuously ask from our sponsored athletes is to be a good role model. They are the walking ambassadors of their own personal brand and are setting the bar for their successors," Tomokane said. TS

where are they now?

JESTER GARCIA

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

MARK RABAGO
TAGA *Sports* Associate Editor

Uprooting one's self from the islands and relocating to the U.S. mainland is no joke. Jester Garcia, a multiple CNMI national men's baseball team player, made that jump some 11 years ago.

"I moved to the [United] States in 2006 to pursue better opportunities," the 30-year-old Northern Marianas College alumnus told TAGA *Sports*.

Garcia lived in Los Angeles, California for about seven years before relocating to Las Vegas in 2013.

On Saipan, Garcia starred in the Saipan Major League, the precursor of the Saipan Baseball League, and won championships in various basketball leagues. He brought that passion with him, sneaking in some time to play ball while working as an IT support specialist for the Comprehensive Cancer Centers of Nevada.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Jester Garcia, kneeling third from right, poses with teammates after their team won the championship in last year's NABA.

"I still play in local softball and baseball leagues here. On weekdays, I play softball with Team ISAO, which consist of guys from back home, and on Sundays, I play baseball," he said.

Garcia, who is from Chalan Kanoa and went to Marianas High School, is also a familiar fixture in the National Adult Baseball Association and Men's Senior Baseball League world baseball tournaments in Phoenix, Arizona every year.

These highly competitive tournaments run from late September to mid-November and have competitions in different age group and divisions.

"Games are all held in MLB [Major League Baseball] spring training facilities and stadiums. Last year, my 35-and-over team from California won our division," Garcia said.

While he's well adjusted now, Garcia admits that making the move to the mainland wasn't easy, especially during the first couple of years.

"At first, it was difficult. The lifestyle is totally different, especially moving first to LA. Everything was in a faster pace. It took some adjustments but, after awhile, you get used to it," he said.

A typical weekday for Garcia these days is punching out from work at 5pm and going home to his wife and son "to do daddy duties."

What he misses most about life in the Commonwealth is the laidback lifestyle.

"What I miss the most about back home is the stress-free lifestyle, the food, the beautiful beaches and the year-round nice weather," he said.

His most cherished game in the CNMI was the gold medal match in the baseball competition of the 2006 Micronesian Games on Saipan.

"There are a lot great memories but one that stood out the most was when we defeated Guam for the gold in the 2006 Micro Games in front of our home crowd. That was an amazing accomplishment because I was part of that historic game," said Garcia.

Aside from playing shortstop for the CNMI national baseball team in the sixth edition of the quadrennial games, Garcia also saw action in the 2010 Micro Games in Koror, Palau.

Other notable achievements for Garcia was being named Playoffs MVP in the 2004 season of the SML where he was also named Infielder of the Year while suiting up for the Miller Lite Brewers.

He acknowledged that his career with the CNMI national baseball team is winding down, but he still managed a shoutout to many-time national baseball team manager and Sports Hall of Famer Tony Rogolifoi to sign him up for the next Micro Games.

"I do plan one day to move back…I'm not sure yet when. But I would like to retire back home. I will do visit soon. And also would love to represent CNMI baseball one more time. So manager, Mr. Tony Rogolofoi, if you're reading this, let me know if I'm still eligible for my last hurrah!" said Garcia, who also wants to coach in Little League when he returns to Saipan.

Moving away is always a difficult decision and takes you out of your comfort zone, but Garcia said those thinking of making the jump should just do it and do everything in their power to succeed.

"Anyone and everyone can make it here in the States. The question is, do you have the drive to succeed, a plan, and a goal to chase? I'm not rich nor drive a fancy car or live in a nice house, but what drives me is my family. I'm driven to work hard to provide a comfortable life for them, to make sure their future is secure."

A quote that Garcia likes and always strives to live by is: "If you want something you've never had, you'll need to do something you've never done."

> "If you want something you've never had, you'll need to do something you've never done"

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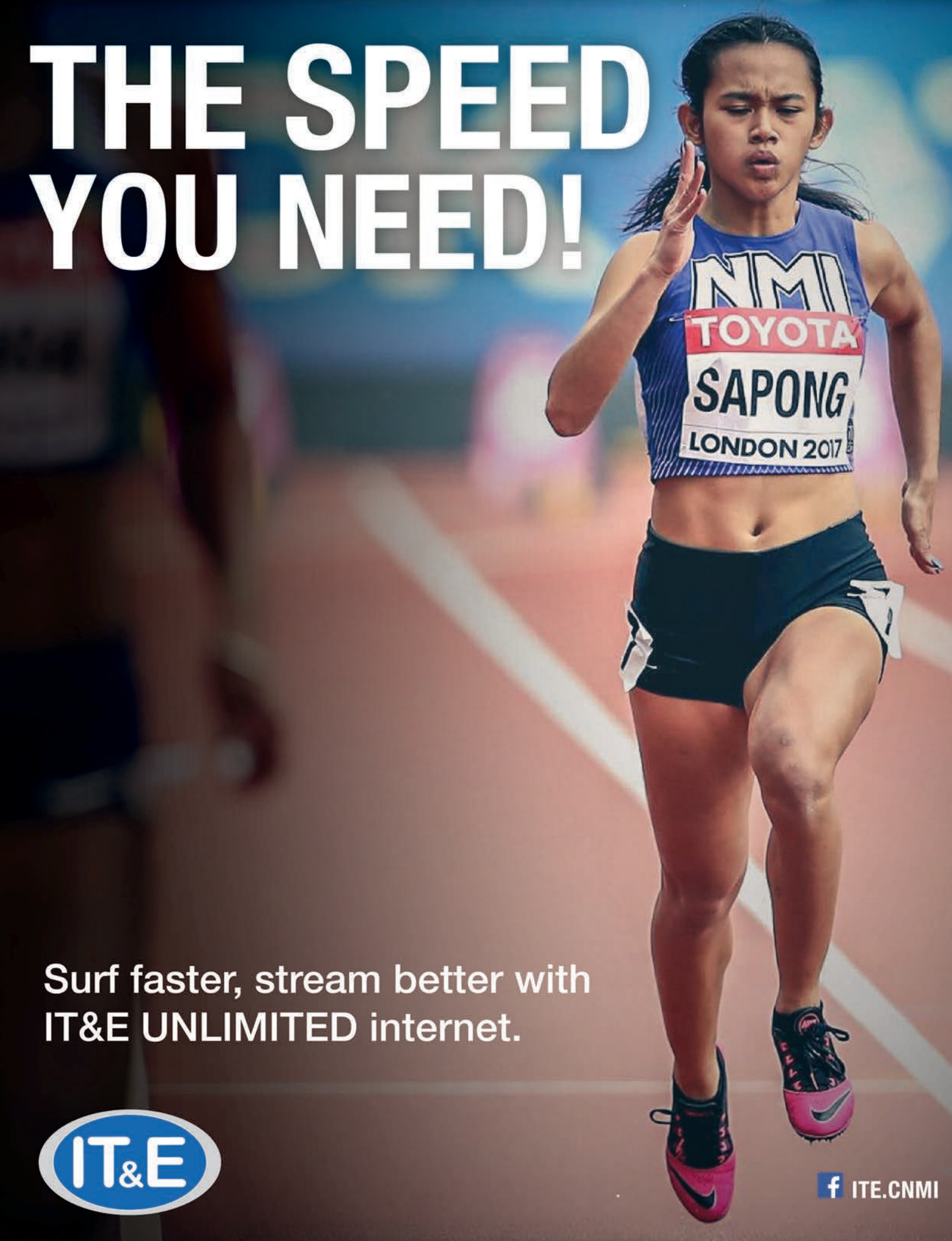
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